

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD.
ROADWORK PROJECT
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When will work on this project start?

Work is tentatively scheduled to begin in May 2022.

What will be the result of the roadwork on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK Jr. Blvd.)?

This \$4.8 million project will include a complete repaving of MLK Jr. Blvd. from S. Claiborne to St. Charles Ave., ADA-compliant curb ramps at all intersections (including in the neutral ground), high-visibility crosswalks at all intersections, repair of damaged sidewalks, and protected bike lanes. The improvements will yield multiple benefits including reduced speeding, safer walkways and crossing for people walking or using wheelchairs, and increased safety for people who ride bikes. Work such as this is in accordance with the City's Complete Streets Policy, as part of an ordinance passed by the City Council and updated under Mayor Cantrell in 2020. The policy is consistent with the City's Master Plan. Learn more about Complete Streets at www.nola.gov/transportation/complete-streets.

Why was MLK Jr. Blvd. chosen for the bike lane installation? Were other streets, or side streets, considered?

Connectivity is an essential part of building any transportation network, including a bikeway network. MLK Jr. Blvd. provides that connectivity between neighborhoods and across other large roadways such as S. Claiborne Avenue. Additionally, MLK Jr. Blvd. is the location of many businesses and community destinations that all residents are seeking to access, regardless of their mode of travel. Improving the access and safety for people walking, bicycling, riding transit, and driving along and across the corridor is the primary objective. Considering that nearly 60% of households in the adjacent neighborhood do not have cars, as well as the heavy pedestrian, bicycle, vehicle and bus traffic on the boulevard, MLK Jr. Blvd. was the preferred corridor to connect the area. (Note: This data comes from the American Community Survey 5-year 2015-2019 for Census Tract 140, which covers the areas between S. Claiborne, Felicity, Oretha Castle Haley, and Calliope.)

What is the anticipated construction sequence for this project?

When roadway construction begins, the work will be focused on the areas closest to the neutral ground for 4-5 months. During this time the parking lanes will be converted to travel lanes. Work will then focus on the property sides of the street for approximately 8-10 months. During this time traffic will use the travel lanes closest to the neutral ground. For information about parking restrictions, see question and answer below.

How will parking be affected?

Parking on MLK Jr. Blvd. will be prohibited throughout the 14-month construction period. Residents and visitors are advised to park on adjacent streets during the construction period. Should special accommodations be needed for people with disabilities, Roadwork NOLA can be

contacted at 504-658-ROAD (7623). Upon completion of construction, on-street parking will be restored on most blocks. Some parking will be reduced along both sides of the roadway to ensure proper sightlines, specifically at intersections and driveways, to improve safety for people traveling on MLK Jr. Blvd. On-street parking will be located between the travel lane and the bike lane.

What are the traffic issues that inform this project?

Historic crash data shows that a total of 1,327 crashes were recorded on MLK Jr. Blvd. and Melpomene Street over the five-year period (2014-2018), resulting in four fatalities and the injury of 624 people. Most crashes occurred at South Claiborne Avenue (760) followed by Simon Bolivar Avenue (51) and Magnolia Street (48). There were 26 crashes involving people walking, one of which resulted in a fatality, and 18 crashes involving people on bicycles, one of which resulted in a fatality. While official traffic numbers for 2021 are not yet finalized, NOPD reports show that New Orleans suffered its worst year for traffic fatalities (66) since 2004.

Why is there so much attention paid to bike lanes?

The work on MLK Jr. Blvd. creates multiple mobility and safety benefits for people walking, bicycling, riding transit, and driving. The project will include repairs and a complete repaving of the roadway, widening the travel lane, ADA-compliant curb ramps, high-visibility crosswalks, repaired sidewalks, and more space for RTA buses to access transit stops. Together, these changes will improve mobility and safety for people traveling along or across MLK Jr. Blvd.

Will reconfiguring MLK Jr. Blvd. from four vehicular lanes to two create congestion?

The reconfiguration of the vehicular lane in either direction, along with the other modifications, aim to improve roadway safety for all users. Speeding is a leading cause of crashes, and higher speeds result in more severe crashes. The roadway reconfiguration will produce a traffic-calming benefit, and reduce the frequency of speeding traffic. This reduction in speed will improve safety for everyone traveling along and across MLK Jr. Blvd., especially people walking and bicycling, who are more vulnerable to injury and death in the event of a crash. As part of the project planning, a traffic study was conducted to review the impact of the roadway reconfiguration, which found there would not be significant impact on traffic throughput. For more information about anticipated traffic impacts, please see the question and answer below.

What traffic analysis was conducted to inform the roadway reconfiguration?

DPW oversaw a traffic study in February 2020 to collect and analyze data on traffic volumes, vehicular speeds, turning movements, pedestrian and bicycle counts. The project area was analyzed using HCS7, a Highway Capacity Manual software, for existing conditions and proposed build conditions. Based on a comparative analysis to show the effect of reducing the travel lanes to just one lane in each direction on MLK Jr. Blvd., the results indicate that traffic is projected to remain consistent to the current conditions. Two travel lanes will be retained in both directions between S. Claiborne Ave. and Clara St. to reduce traffic impacts. Similarly, two travel lanes will remain at the Simon Bolivar Avenue intersection to reduce traffic impacts.

How will the reduction of a vehicular lane impact emergency response and/or evacuation during weather events, given how close MLK Jr. Blvd. is to Interstate 10?

As with any road project, the Department of Public Works consults with our public safety agencies to ensure that the reconfiguration of a given roadway will not impact emergency response efforts. Regarding evacuation routes, there are multiple access points between the Pontchartrain Expressway and MLK Jr. Blvd. corridor, all of which will remain in place and accessible in the event of an evacuation.

How can we learn more about the project?

A community Pre-Construction meeting was hosted at the Allie Mae Williams Multi-Service Center on April 26, 2022. The materials shared at that meeting are available online, [here](#). Materials from previous community meetings are also available online at www.nola.gov/mnob.

What sidewalk repairs will be included in the project?

The project will include replacing damaged sidewalks and driveway aprons, as well as the construction of ADA-compliant curb ramps at all intersections (including in the neutral ground). Additionally, high-visibility crosswalks will be marked at every intersection.

Will residents and visitors still be able to access MLK Jr. Blvd. for entry and exit to homes and businesses along the roadway, including the nearby Guste Homes property?

At least one travel lane will be open for travel in both directions on MLK Jr. Blvd. during construction. Simon Bolivar Ave. and Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. will remain open throughout construction. There will be intermittent closures across the median between St. Charles Ave. and S. Claiborne Ave. throughout construction. There will be some work along the neutral ground areas and sidewalks that may limit access during construction, but there will generally be access to sidewalks and the neutral ground throughout construction.

Can the Mobile Enforcement Unit vehicle be deployed in the neighborhood if the construction results in speeding traffic?

Residents should report any speeding issues to Roadwork NOLA at 504-658-ROAD (7623).

Will this project include repairs to the path in the Martin Luther King Jr Walk located on the neutral ground?

ADA-compliant curb ramps are being installed in the neutral ground at each intersection, which will improve access to the neutral ground path. Additional repairs to the neutral ground path are not included in this project.

Does the roadway reconfiguration impact the designated truck route along MLK Jr. Blvd?

The reconfiguration of the roadway will allow for standard-width lanes for truck traffic to safely navigate. Additionally, the designated truck route on MLK Jr. Blvd. does not serve as a connecting truck route, so the majority of trucks are serving local destinations.

What community engagement has taken place for this project?

In 2019, a citywide community planning process was undertaken to develop the Citywide Bikeway Blueprint. This process included multiple community meetings across the City, including at least one in every Council District. Following the planning effort, specific projects started advancing into design, including MLK Jr. Blvd. Another series of community meetings were hosted to present conceptual designs, seek public input, and incorporate that input into the project. The MLK Jr. Blvd. conceptual design meeting was held on July 9, 2020 and the pre-construction meeting was held on Nov. 19, 2020. Details of all meetings, including presentations, since the start of the planning process in 2019 are available at www.nola.gov/mnob as a record of the community engagement process. Here's a timeline:

April 2019 – Eight meetings were held to gather public input for a citywide bicycle network in each of the five City Council Districts (340 attendees).

- July August 2019 – Three meetings were organized to present a draft of the network plan.
- July 2020 – Central City/Lower Garden District Conceptual Design community meeting to discuss upcoming proposed roadway projects including bikeway implementation.
- November 2020 – Central City/Lower Garden District Pre-Construction community meeting to discuss community input from the conceptual design meeting and present final proposals.

In addition to public meetings, input was received online between April and June 2019 through an online interactive bike network planning map. A total of 2,288 people commented and made recommendations.

Following delays in the project delivery timeline, increased community outreach and engagement ramped back up in March 2022. This included additional canvassing, outreach to key stakeholders, and a range of other events in advance of the pre-construction meeting on April 26, 2022. Continued outreach and engagement are planned throughout the construction period.

Learn more about the more general frequently asked questions about Moving New Orleans bikes [here](#).

